

## THE PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE ON BOYS AND GIRLS ACROSS SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS

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### ABSTRACT

Physical Abuse is one of the most common forms of child abuse. Physical abuse in children can be in the form of hitting, kicking, throwing, strangulation, hitting with objects, burning or other methods. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is appropriate and does not cause any physical injury to the child. (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). The present study aims at assessing the prevalence of physical abuse on boys and girls across socio economic groups. A total of sample of 300 children in the age group of 7-12 years. 150 boys and 150 girls, out of which, 50 each belonging to lower, middle and upper socio economic group were selected using stratified random sampling technique for the study. Socio Economic Status scale by Kuppaswamy (1962) revised by Gururaj and Maheshwaran (2014) was used to ascertain the socioeconomic status of the selected respondents. To assess the physical abuse a self made questionnaire was administered on the selected children. The study revealed that respondents from lower socio economic group face higher level of physical abuse as compare their counterparts from middle and upper socio economic group. The study also revealed that socioeconomic status has a significant influence on the physical abuse of the respondents.

**KEYWORDS:** Child Abuse, Physical Abuse, Maltreatment and Socioeconomic Status

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### INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a worldwide problem that has existed in various forms for centuries in all societies and cultures. Infanticide, ritual amputation, sexual abuse, slavery, abandonment and the like were common in ancient times and continue to varying degrees in present-day society. Child abuse is a condition of emotional, physical, economic and sexual abuse of a person under the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon. However, in India, as in many other countries, there is no understanding of the extent, magnitude and trends of the problem. The dramatic changes brought about by the increasing complexities of life and socio-economic changes in India have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to different and new forms of abuse. As defined by the World Health Organization: Child abuse constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or neglectful behaviour or

commercial or other abuse, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse is a very common type of child abuse faced by children at home, at school and in society. Physical Abuse is non accidental physical injury (ranging from minor injury to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, suffocating, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other objects), burning, or otherwise harming the child, which is committed by a parent, caregiver, or other people who have responsibility for the child. Such an injury is considered abuse, even if the caregiver intended to hurt the child.

## METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research design was adopted for the present study and cross sectional survey method was used for collecting the data. A total of sample of 300 children in the age group of 7-12 years. 150 boys and 150 girls, out of which, 50 each belonging to lower, middle and upper socio economic group were selected using stratified random sampling technique for the study from different schools of Allahabad city. Kuppaswamy (1962) Socio Economic Status Scale revised by **Gururaj & Maheshwaran (2014)** was used to ascertain the socioeconomic status of the sample and a self made questionnaire on child abuse was used to assess the physical abuse among children.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows indicates that 28 percent girls belonging to lower socio economic status experienced high level of physical abuse closely followed by 22 percent girls from middle socio economic status and 20 percent from upper socio economic status experienced high level of physical abuse.

The data represented in the above table indicates that 22 percent girls belonging to lower socio economic status experienced moderate level of physical abuse followed by 18 percent girls from middle socio economic status and 18 percent from upper socio economic status experienced moderate level of physical abuse.

In case of low level of physical abuse it is seen that 18 percent of girls belonging to lower socio economic status experienced low level of physical abuse followed by 16 percent girls from middle socio economic status and 14 percent from upper socio economic status experienced low level of physical abuse. The data clearly reflects that girls from lower socio economic group face higher level of physical abuse as compared their counterparts from middle and upper socio economic status. The risk of corporal punishment is reported to be greatest among parents from low socioeconomic status family backgrounds and whose parents were controlling, restrictive and more protective while middle-income and high-income parents show greater warmth and indulgence.

Whereas, in case of 32 percent of girls belonging to lower socio economic status experienced no abuse of emotional abuse followed by 44 percent girls from middle socio economic status and 48 percent from upper socio economic status experienced no abuse of physical abuse.

The results are according to the study done by Kewalramani (1996) who points out that a large number of physically abused children (about 60 percent) belong to poor families and only a small proportion (about 2 percent) belong to well to do families.

Lansford et al. (2002) examined the long-term effects of early physical abuse on a range psychological, behavioral, and educational outcomes for adolescents. Findings revealed a persistent effect of abuse over the course of

development. In particular, adolescents who had experienced abuse as children had significantly higher levels of aggression, anxiety and depression, social problems, thought problems, and social withdrawal than their non abused peers.

Table 2 shows furnish information regarding physical abuse among boys belonging to different socioeconomic status. The data represented in the above table 32percent boys belonging to lower socio economic status experienced high level of physical abuse closely followed by 22 percent boys from middle socioeconomic status and 18 percent from upper socioeconomic status experienced high level of physical abuse.

The data represented in the above table indicates that 20 percent boys belonging to lower socio economic status experienced moderate category of physical abuse closely followed by 18 percent boys from middle socioeconomic status and 16 percent from upper socioeconomic status experienced moderate category of physical abuse.

In case of low level of physical abuse it is seen that 18 percent boys belonging to lower socio economic status experienced low level of physical abuse closely followed by 16 percent boys from middle socioeconomic status and 18 percent from upper socioeconomic status experienced low level of physical abuse. The use of corporal punishment to discipline non-compliance and aggression has been found to be more prevalent in households from lower socioeconomic class than middle socioeconomic status.

The Table also highlights that 30 percent boys from lower socio economic group experienced no physical abuse followed by 42 percent boys from middle socioeconomic status and 48 percent from upper socioeconomic status experienced no abuse of physical abuse. Childhood abuse has significant consequences on psychological and health outcomes. Childhood abuse also contributes to child mortality and morbidity and affect the physical and mental health and school performance of children. The results can be supported by the study carried out Haapasalo and Tremblay (1994).who studied family background, parenting behavior, and predictive of delinquency among physically aggressive boys. These boys from lower socio-economic environments were rated by teachers as physically aggressive at the ages of 6, 10, 11 and 12 years and graded according to the stability of the fight over time. Thus the study showed that the physically aggressive behavior of boys in low socio-economic environments was related to family adversity and poor parenting and predicted delinquency. Zingraff and colleagues (1993)found that abused children had higher rates of complaints of crime and violence than non-abused school and poor children.

Table 3 shows highlight the variance in physical abuse on the basis of gender and socio economic status. On the basis of gender, the table clearly shows a non significant variance between boys and girls with regard to physical abuse as the F calculated value is 2.8 which is less than its tabulated value ie. 18.51 at 5 percent level of significance. Furthermore on the basis of socioeconomic status the F calculated value is 206.4 which is greater than the F tabulated value ( $F_{2,2}$  i.e.19.00) at 5 percent probability level. Therefore it can be concluded that socioeconomic status has a significant influence on the physical abuse of the respondents.

It is observed from various studies that physical abuse come from relatively larger families(3 sibling) with lower socio economic status. As the number of children increase, parents tend to lose control over them so they beat one or two children so the other children will fear of punishment. Also, increasing the children number in the family will increase the load on the mother so she tends to be violent with them.

The results are according to the study conducted byThe Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) found a wide spread incidence of child abuse. Children between the ages of 5-12 are most at risk of abuse and exploitation. The

study found that 69 % of children reported physical abuse. Of these, 54.68% were boys. 52.91% of boys and 47.09% of girls reported abuse in their family environment. Of the children who were abused in family situations, 88.6% were abused by their parents. Two out of three school children each reported facing corporal punishment.

Table 4 shows comparison table significant difference was observed between  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $S_3$  and between  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$  between. Value of  $S_1$  is the highest as compared to  $S_2$ ,  $S_3$ . Which indicates that physical abuse is the highest among lower socio economic group and is the lowest in the upper socio economic group? Chawla (2011) reported that parents from families with low socioeconomic status are more punitive and exhibit harsher attitudes toward children than parents from families with middle and high socioeconomic status.

**Table 1: Distribution of Girls on the Basis of Prevalence of Physical Abuse**

Category of Physical Abuse	Lower.SES n=50		Middle.SES n=50		Upper.SES n=50	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
High (21-26)	14	28	11	22	10	20
Moderate (15-20)	11	22	9	18	9	18
Low (7-14)	9	18	8	16	7	14
No abuse (0-6)	16	32	22	44	24	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2 : Distribution of Boys on the Basis of Prevalence of Physical Abuse**

Category of Physical Abuse	Lower.SES n=50		Middle.SES n=50		Upper.SES n=50	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
High (21-26)	16	32	11	22	9	18
Moderate (15-20)	10	20	9	18	8	16
Low (7-14)	9	18	8	16	9	18
No abuse (0-6)	15	30	22	42	24	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: ANOVA for Physical Abuse on the Basis of Gender and Socio Economic Status**

Source of Variation	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Square	Mean of Square	F-Cal	F- Tab (5%)	Result
Due to Gender	1	0.56	0.56	2.8	$F_{1,2}=18.51$	Non Significant
Due to Socio economic status	2	82.56	41.28	206.4	$F_{2,2}=19.00$	Significant
Due to error	2	0.40	0.20	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>83.52</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 4: Comparison Table for Socio Economic Status Against Critical Value**

	$S_1 = 20.44$	$S_2 = 17.40$
$S_3 = 11.55$	8.94*	5.85*
$S_2 = 17.40$	3.09*	-

$S_1 =$  LSES  $S_2 =$  MSES  $S_3 =$  USES

## CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded from the present study that respondents from lower socio economic group face higher level of physical abuse as compare their counterparts from middle and upper socio economic groups. The study also revealed that socio economic status has a significant influence on physical abuse and gender not influence on physical abuse on the respondents. It also reflects the influence of socio economic status which is an important determinant to be considered as an incidental factor of physical abuse among children.

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